

# PROFILES OF SUCCESS

## Vietnamese Women in the Construction Industry



**Associate Professor  
Pham Thuy Loan**

Vice Director at Vietnam  
Institute of Architecture

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*This portrait is part of the Vietnam Clean Energy Program's series on 'women champions' in the Vietnamese construction sector, featuring women who have made strides in this male-dominated field, coming from diverse backgrounds and with different interests, but bound together by the common themes of a strong work ethic, love of country, a strong belief in themselves, a passion for their work.*

### **Pham Thuy Loan: Breaking Barriers, Shaping Young Minds**

Raised by a father who was an electrical engineer and a mother who was in academe, Pham Thuy Loan developed an early interest in the arts, and in painting and photography in particular. As a young girl growing up in Hanoi, she would draw and paint every opportunity she had, and her parents supported her interests. Seeing a close connection between art and science, she decided to pursue a degree in Architecture from the Hanoi University of Civil Engineering and became a lecturer at the university after graduation.

Loan later went to Japan to obtain her Masters and Doctorate degrees in Urban Engineering and Design from Tokyo University. Her research focused on urban design in Hanoi, where she was born and felt a close connection to. “I wanted to focus on how I could help rebuild my country, which had been ravaged by war. There were a lot of ways to do that, but to me, building a high quality living environment for the Vietnamese people was the best way I could contribute,” says Loan.

She returned to Hanoi University of Civil Engineering after finishing her graduate degree to resume working as a lecturer and architect. Loan

began contributing to research projects for Vietnamese government agencies and international organizations, creating an urban design framework for public spaces in Vietnam, assessing the performance of public housing developers in Hanoi, and



*Ms. Loan moderates at an event.  
(Source: Pham Thuy Loan)*



*Ms. Loan with her daughters.  
(Source: Pham Thuy Loan)*



*Ms. Loan Presenting at Vietnam Institute of Architecture.  
(Source: Pham Thuy Loan)*

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evaluating living conditions in Hanoi's Old Quarter. Loan is currently the Vice Director at Vietnam Institute of Architecture. "I have lots of questions in my mind all the time and spend a lot of time trying to find the answers. I'm hard on myself in everything I do. I think that's the reason the quality of my work is high, as I am very driven," says Loan.

She sees this work combination as an ideal set up. She views teaching as a means to mold young people and encourage innovation, and architecture and research work as an opportunity to channel her creativity. "I find many chances to develop and explore myself in construction and architecture work. It's very flexible and creative. The best part is that there is always a new approach you can take each time. If I had a chance to live again, I would still choose to be an architect and a lecturer," said Loan. "I love my life and I love what I'm doing." On top of all her professional pursuits, Loan is a mother to two young girls as well as a recreational painter. These days, she mostly does portraits of her daughters using watercolor and pastels.

Being a successful woman architect and professor in Vietnam is not without its challenges. As in most other societies, Vietnamese women are often seen as caretakers of the home, first and foremost. If they want to have a career, they must find a way to balance work with their responsibilities caring for the home and family. "Women have limited time for themselves. They play a social and economic role like men, but they also play a big role in the family. When I face these difficulties in my professional or personal life, I try to clearly understand the challenges and eventually figure out how to deal with them. You cannot do everything at once. You need to understand what your first priority is in a certain period of life," she concedes.

Her advice to young women who want to have both a successful career and family life? "No matter what you do, understanding yourself and having a clear goal in mind are the keys to success. Stick to your dream and work with passion – it's what I keep telling my students," she adds. "When you have a strong spirit, you cannot be defeated."